

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8314

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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TAGS: PINT, PINS, PK

SUBJECT: BALUCHISTAN MINISTER TALKS WITH DISSIDENTS

SUMMARY: GHOU S BUX RAISANI, TRIBAL SARDAR AND SECOND MAN IN THE BALUCHISTAN CABINET, HAS CONTACTED ARMED HOSTILE TRIBAL ELEMENTS DIRECTLY AND URGED THEM TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS BEFORE PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S OCTOBER 15 DEADLINE. OTHER INTERMEDIARIES ARE ALSO ACTIVE. IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT THEY WILL ENJOY MUCH SUCCESS UNLESS BHUTTO COMES TO TERMS WITH THE THREE IMPRISONED SARDARS-- WHICH MIGHT ONLY CREATE NEW DIFFICULTIES FOR HIM. END SUMMARY

1. SPEAKING TO NEWSMEN OCTOBER 17 IN QUETTA, BALUCHISTAN CHIEF MINISTER JAM MIR GHULAM QADIR CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT HIS MINISTRY IS IN DIRECT AND INDIRECT CONTACT WITH SOME OF THE HOSTILE ELEMENTS IN THE PROVINCE. HE CONFIRMED THAT SARDAR RAISANI, A FORMER GOVERNOR AND FEDERAL MINISTER NOW HOLDING THE PROVINCIAL FINANCE AND AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIOS (AND THE SECOND PLACE IN THE CABINET) HAD MET WITH RINGLEADERS OF THE TRIBAL DISSIDENTS (PRESUMABLY MENGALS) AT JOHAN IN KALAT DISTRICT. RAISANI HAD URGED THEM TO ACCEPT

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BHUTTO'S OFFER OF AMNESTY IF THEY LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS BEFORE

OCTOBER 15. QADIR PRONOUNCED HIMSELF "QUITE SATISFIED" WITH THE TALKS BUT REFUSED TO DISCLOSE THE TRIBALS' REACTION.

2. QADIR ALSO CONFIRMED THE FORMATION OF A "CONCILIATION COMMITTEE" COMPRISING EIGHT TRIBAL LEADERS, BOTH BALUCH AND PATHAN. THEY HAD MET WITH BHUTTO, GOVERNOR MIR AHMED YAR KHAN (ALSO THE PARAMOUNT BALUCH SARDAR), AND QADIR TO REVIEW THE PRESENT SITUATION WITH A VIEW TOWARD AN AMICABLE SETTLEMENT. THE COMMITTEE PLANS TO MEET WITH VARIOUS GROUPS IN THE PROVINCE (PRESUMABLE INCLUDING THE DISSIDENTS), THEN REPORT TO BHUTTO IN ISLAMABAD. THERE ARE OTHER REPORTS TO THE EFFECT THAT FOUR OPPOSITION NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY (NAP) PROVINCIAL LEGISLATORS, INCLUDING THE BALUCHISTAN ASSEMBLY SPEAKER AND THE GOVERNOR'S SON, MET WITH BHUTTO IN QUETTA AND LATER WITH SOME OF THE IMPRISONED NAP SARDARS IN PUNJAB IN SEARCH OF A VIA MEDIA.

3. COMMENT: WE HAVE NEVER DOUBTED THAT THE BALUCHISTAN GOVERNMENT IS IN AT LEAST INDIRECT CONTACT WITH THE ARMED HOSTILE ELEMENTS, BOTH THE MENGALS IN KALAT AND THE MARRIS AND BUGTIS FURTHER EAST. THE MARRIS SEEM MORE NUMEROUS AND ACTIVE THAN THE MENGALS. THE REVELATION OF DIRECT TALKS AT THIS TIME INDICATES THAT BOTH THE PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS APPEAR WILLING TO EXPLORE ALL POSSIBLE AVENUES TOWARD A SETTLEMENT LEST THEY BE LEFT WITH NO OPTIONS BUT TO PUT UP OR SHUT UP AFTER OCTOBER 15. HOWEVER, IT IS OUR VIEW THAT THE DISSIDENTS WILL NOT CEASE AND DESIST UNTIL THE THREE MAJOR IMPRISONED NAP SARDARS -- KHAIR BAKHSH MARRI, CHOUS BAKHSH BIZENJO, AND ATTAULLAH MENGAL -- SO DIRECT THEM. THE NAP CONTINUES TO DEMAND THEIR RELEASE BEFORE ANY TALKS WITH BHUTTO. FREEING THE THREE SARDARS, HOWEVER, COULD WEAKEN THE POSITION OF PRO-BHUTTO PROVINCIAL LEADERS (NOTABLY QADIR) AND BE TAKEN AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS AT HOME AND ABROAD. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS HERE THAT THE IMPRISONED SARDARS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS MAY IN FACT SPURN A SETTLEMENT AND STEP UP THEIR ACTIVITY IN BALUCHISTAN.

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